

BARGAINS IN PEACHBASKETS

A HUNT FOR BLACK CHERRIES IN DIVISION STREET.

The Cut Rate Millinery and the Enterprising Saleswomen of the East Side Willow Feathers and Gorgeous Flowers, but No Fruit to Be Had.

Outside a store in Division street you stop and ask the proprietress if she happens to have any black cherries to replace the bunch that has dropped one by one from the front of your Fifth Avenue peach basket confection. You ask it outside because she happens to be sitting there, huddled up in a wet corner with a triangular shawl drawn tight about her. She has laid a detaining hand on your arm, which accounts for your choosing that particular shop for your initial inquiry. She starts to answer your question and then, catching sight of a silver necklace of the Oriental make, grabs it instead.

"Must have cost a heap of money, hey? Makes Tiffany look like a pawnbroker," she says. "My son snubbed his toe an' fell over a piece like that sometime," only it had diamonds in it; he put it in his pocket, thought it was glass until he had his attention called by a police officer to aid in the paper. Worth as much as yours, I guess. Sweetheart? Better hang on, they're slippery these days. Must think a heap of you, though. Five hundred dollars worth, anyway."

You recall her to the subject of your inquiry and point out where the cherries have fallen from their high estate.

"Black cherries? My, we've got heaps of 'em. She looks critically at those remaining. "None as cheap as them, though. Guess you got 'em over on Grand street. Lots of people make that mistake, think there ain't any millinery except that, and it ain't got any more style to it than if you got it on Myrtle avenue, Brooklyn."

She leads the way through an avenue of millinery boxes piled high on either side to the rear of the small store. The floor is covered with excelsior and a clothesline carries a horizontal decoration of pendant hats. You catch an accompanying murmur of remarks as to the superiority of her cherry harvest over any in the neighborhood.

Finally her advance is stopped by the seated figure of a solitary man who is placidly chewing gum or something else and has a proprietary air as he views the picturesque surroundings.

"Pop, these ladies want some black cherries. I told 'em we had some fine ones, but they'd have to pay; we don't keep no cheap goods."

Pop looks his customers over, changes the location of the source of his serenity and looks languidly at the shelves and counters, where a meagre supply of millinery equipment is to be seen.

"We ain't got no cherries," he replies.

all flowers now and plumes, you know. "Here's some lovely laylucks, purple. You'd have to pay \$20 for a wreath like that on Fifth avenue, because it's getting on to the end of the season an' of course we don't have the rents here. It's a bargain, I can tell yer, and it'd look lovely with that necklace."

"You don't care for it, you want cherries? Well, how'd this hat do? It's Neapolitan and that jet buckle at the

out a scrawny hand pulls vigorously at a passing mackintosh.

The owner with her companion has stopped to gaze with awe and astonishment at the single hat in the window. It is of the peach basket variety and its trimming resembles a country orchard. From the base of silk apples stuffed with cotton springs a tower of plumes, and wide ribbons are tied coquettishly about the holder, which represents a chin. A pla-



SHE COULD TELL A DIVISION STREET HAT AS FAR AS SHE COULD SEE IT.

side cost \$1.50 at wholesale. You can have it for \$1.25, the whole thing, or here's a light blue chip with a bunch of red feathers. That red's a smart color, ain't it? It's the feathers that make it cost, and red, too. It's \$2.50 but if you took the bunch off and put a ribbon bow there, purple'd be smart on that blue, you could have it for \$1."

"You want cherries? Why, they ain't wearing cherries. Pop, you know they ain't wearing cherries. You remember Abe was in the street day, just back from Paris, and he didn't see a whole cherry while he was gone."

She follows you to the door and declares persistently on the lack of understanding that causes you to prefer to follow your own bent instead of her suggestions. However, she regains her good nature as she takes her chair and putting

card announces that it is a special sale and the price is \$10.

The invitation is not taken and the mackintosh is freed by a masterly effort from the clinging fingers, while its owner and her companion saunter by.

"Sightseers!" snorts the proprietress as she huddles herself anew into her shawl and her wet corner. "Ain't buyin' just window lookers. Make me think. She vouchsafes you a parting word of like amiability. "If you find cherries anywhere it'll be on Grand street. They keep all the tag ends after the Division shops get through."

You try again further along the block that is still punctuated here and there by windows blossoming with all sorts and kinds of millinery attractions, although a passerby informs you that since the building of the new bridge the neighborhood has rapidly changed and the majority of the famous shops of this sort are seeking new quarters in nearby streets, preferably Grand, which is to the Division street millinery what Fifth avenue is to the uptown modiste.

"Most of the owners of these shabby looking stores have made money too," he adds. "They've been at it for years and are shrewd buyers. Lots of nice people come here, people from Jersey and the Bronx and Long Island, and they pick up bargains too. There's been hundreds of thousands of dollars made in Division street millinery in times past, but its day is practically over now."

Apparently the little lame girl of whom you inquire for black cherries next does not think so. She is very quiet, almost shy in her manner, and has little of the aggressiveness of the usual

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Well, the gang herded the forty and odd street pianos in front of Dresser's house and had 'em all start "Two Little Girls in Blue" together in about forty and odd different keys and tempos. The Gluepusses were instructed not to play anything else but to rattle right along till further orders with "Two Little Girls in Blue."

The humorists seated themselves comfortably at the second story windows of a tidy grocery on the corner across the way from Paul's house, where with liquid refreshments and things they could enjoy the contemplation of how Paul was feeling about it.

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"I DON'T LIKE DEM BASKETS."

Division street seller. She explains this later by saying that she is a new hand and is in her first place.

She is very anxious in a nice, ladylike way that you should help her to make good, for she hasn't had sales enough yet to assure herself of the permanency of her job.

"I haven't got any black cherries," she says rather sadly, "but I've got three lovely willow plumes. I think black would look perfectly lovely on that hat. I've got a friend uptown, Miss Morrissey—perhaps you know her—she works on Fifth avenue—and she says that you've just got to have a willow plume if you want to be in."

"Some people like to have these plumes turned on their backs, this way. They're called lobster plumes then—don't those long things look like lobster claws? Miss Morrissey said they was called that because only lobsters could afford to buy 'em, but they ain't dear at all. This is only \$15, and the black of course is more, but ain't it worth a dollar more to have a black feather?"

You mildly suggest at this point of the monologue that as you started out to buy a 75 cent bunch of cherries a \$15 willow plume hardly seems like good housekeeping, but your objections if not overruled are at least laid on the table, or to be exact, on the pasteboard cover which in the Division street shop takes the place of that article of furniture.

"Of course it ain't as cheap as cherries, I know, but it'll last for years." Seeing no sign of yielding she continues with a new pleading in her tone. "If you'd take it you'd be my first sale and we're awful superstitious down here about our first sales; if we make 'em to nice people and they're big, why, the whole day goes



"FRUIT AIN'T FASHIONABLE ANY MORE."

all right and we always make reductions on the first sale, too.

"I can let you have that lobster for \$14.75, or the black for \$15, that's a whole dollar off and we wouldn't think of it if you weren't the first that came in. You want cherries and not any plumes? Well, it's too bad. I wish you could meet Miss Morrissey. I know she'd make you see what a mistake you're making, but I guess it's 'cause I ain't used to selling willows."

You inquire of an idle policeman if he has any idea where you would be likely to find black cherries on Division street. He thinks at first that you are speaking of the real article and says that it's a little early in the season but later on the pushcart men will have plenty. You explain that you are thinking of the decorative and not the dinner kind, and when his attention is directed toward the millinery end he gets enthusiastic.

"I tell you when you get on Division street you can get anything you want except a Salome dance; you can't get that yet, not in the daytime, but anything else. If I was buying black cherries I'd go over on Grand street."

"There ain't any millinery on Fifth avenue can touch it, and look at the guys that commenced down here and now are just the top of the heap, and if anybody goes into them emporiums, in particular near one of the Forties, and asks the proprietor if he can direct 'em to Grand street, why, they say he shoos 'em out so quick that a moving picture's like an Elysian funeral in comparison."

You elude the policeman's pointing finger and slip inside the next shop that shows its purpose by a periphery of green straw encircled with a garland of pale yellow blossoms of the hollyhock size and shape, which you learn later are willow flowers. A hat on the opposite side of the window runs it a close second. This is of black chip, turned up at the back, with a fountain of upshooting lavender asprezza and a huge black rose with a golden centre. The price is \$8; and while you are in the establishment on your modest quest it is sold to a buxom Jewess who wears hoop earrings and an Empire gown of pink, rain spotted, for \$4.69. It is explained that she is a regular customer.

The shop extends far into the rear. A few would-be purchasers are seated here and a trio of East Side saleswomen stand about or languidly condescend to show their goods.

They are very magnificent in appearance. Their pompadours extend far beyond their faces and arrive at any given point about a second before the wearers. In the back, a similar hairdo equipment prevents rear end collisions, and one of them explains to a personal if highly complimentary remark on the part of one of the seated throng that it is built on a small pin cushion and that she does not take it down at night.

A row of pathetic looking women are standing limp as to backbone in front of one of the most talkative sellers. They are apparently overcome by the magnificence of their surroundings, but they have the courage to utter a few words. They would look foreign anywhere except in Division street. Only one, the head of the line, has the buying attitude. The others are seemingly friends and a court of appeal at the same time.

The buyer is sallow skinned, and her hair, drawn tight back and ending in a knob about the size of a door knocker, forms a striking contrast to that of the gum chewing fat seller, who in a trig tailor skirt and Dutch neck lingerie waist reminds you in manner if not style of the milliner assistants of the uptown districts. A large hat trimmed with perky bows, turquoise in tint, with a cluster of cabbage roses, has been selected for the first tryout and is handed with patronizing gesture to the head of the line, who shakes her head and without unclasping her limp hands interrogates the court of appeal. They shake their heads in unison and speak as if they had practiced beforehand:

"We don't like it."

"They don't like it," repeats the salesgirl to the rest of the assistants, who repeat the phrase in shocked surprise. "We don't like it."

The row of waiting purchasers look at

one another and chorus, as if at rehearsal of a Greek tragedy:

"They don't like it." Another hat is taken from the array, this time of the mushroom kind, with a purple panache. It covers the head of the salesgirl who tries it on coquettishly; even her coiffure fails to prevent the total eclipse.

"Perfectly grand!" shriek the rest of the sales corps. "We don't like it," say the line of shoppers.

"They don't like it," repeat the visitors on the row of chairs.

Another hat is tried and another and another, with like result.

Finally, without any farewell, the row turns as if on a pivot and stalks out.

The corps of sellers watch them and the head of the establishment expresses the

active tongue of the lot, announcing in a tone that no one would dare contradict that nobody wears hats on steamers now. "Never heard of such a thing," she states. "What would you want to wear a hat for?"

A third inquires, "Second class or steerage?" and the rest look impressed by her intuition and knowledge. "It must cost a lot to go," she comments, "much as five hundred dollars. Yes? They say the steerage is very nice now on the new boats."

This all leads very nicely and easily to the request for black cherries, and when you make it you are not surprised to learn that they have a special quality; better than any you could get in the other shops. The searcher returns with a single bunch of red raspberries and says they are more fashionable; that cherries have gone out, and when they had them they couldn't sell them because they were very unbecoming.

"It is bad luck to wear them, too. Now a wreath something like this—the this is an herbaraceous array of some seventeen varieties of herbs and plants."

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Your assertion that it owed its origin to the creative mind of a Fifth Avenue milliner is received with silent smiles or contempt. One of the saleswomen says she could duplicate it for \$4, and you do not contradict; perhaps she could.

You approach the subject of the missing fruit at the next Division street shop by a circuitous route, asking first for steamer hats.

There is the same corps of effusive saleswomen, five in number, presided over by a matronly looking person, whose husband stands by the door and gazes disconsolately at each possible customer, as if he was afraid he might be asked to get something down from the shelves.

The mention of steamer hats starts a flood of reminiscence. A member of the corps recalls vividly that she came over when she was 5, but she doesn't remember what they wore then. Another goes poking about among the multiplicity of boxes and returns with a carwheel trimmed with a flower garden and declares that they have sold hundreds of them for steamer trips to Coney Island and that every buyer was perfectly satisfied.

After a moment's silence the matron



SIGHTSEERS.



GRAND STREET PSYCHES.

at length. Then he resumes his interrupted labors.

The proprietress is perfectly poised as she listens to this contradiction of her assertion. She zigzags her way through side lanes of boxes and opens one or two en route.

"They don't wear cherries no more; they're all out of style long ago. We sold heaps of 'em when they first came in months ago, but it's

wearing cherries. Pop, you know they ain't wearing cherries. You remember Abe was in the street day, just back from Paris, and he didn't see a whole cherry while he was gone."

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